

Members of the House are attempting to face up to a historic fiscal crisis exacerbated by two years of excessive federal spending.

The House passed a continuing resolution to fund government operations for the remainder of 2011. Unlike other such temporary funding measures, this one reduced federal spending by \$61 billion compared to 2010 funding levels.

Some may claim that these spending reductions are draconian. I understand the street level impact of addressing our nation's fiscal crisis, yet the results of failing to address it will be far worse. Congress must ask if it is worth borrowing forty cents in order to fund every dollar of spending we vote on. That kind of sober analysis may mean that some well-liked programs will have to find new sources of funding – if we are to bring federal spending in line with tax revenues again.

As I talk to my friends and neighbors across the Second District, it is clear that people in Missouri understand the reality many in Washington still refuse to face: unsustainable spending has put our country on a collision course with economic disaster.

Consider this, in 2011:

- every discretionary dollar that the federal government spends will be borrowed.
- entitlement programs and the interest on our national debt will require every dollar that the federal government brings in as revenue.
- the federal deficit will be a record \$1.5 trillion.
- the federal government will borrow \$4,800 on behalf of every citizen of the United States.

I applaud the efforts of my House colleagues to reduce spending during the rest of this year. That said, more than a mere trimming back on discretionary spending is needed. Unfortunately, we could zero out all discretionary spending, and we still wouldn't reverse the long term budget trajectory determined by our growing entitlement programs. Our financial house is on far shakier ground than can just be accounted for by waste, fraud and abuse.

President Obama proposed his budget for FY2012 earlier this month. It includes \$3.8 trillion in new spending, \$1.6 trillion in new taxes and \$1.6 trillion in deficit spending – without even beginning to reform entitlements. His own fiscal commission recommended immediate steps to reform entitlements – steps that the president’s budget does not include. While the president talks about investing in our children’s future, his appetite for big spending continues to threaten their future. Without entitlement reform, we face a total economic meltdown in the middle of this century.

Where does this leave us?

First, we need to determine which functions of the federal government are truly essential for our nation’s security and prosperity. The president and Congress must stop proposing more spending and nifty new programs and instead only fund programs that are truly vital to our nation. I believe maintaining a strong defense is a vital, Constitutional responsibility of the federal government, but I think many other items of our discretionary spending are optional, or unconstitutional.

Second, we must substantively reform our entitlement programs. While it is always easier to kick the can down the road, we are past the point when we can keep doing so without serious consequences. Rep. Paul Ryan, chairman of the House Budget Committee, has proposed what he calls “A Roadmap for America’s Future” that would address these issues in a responsible manner. While not everyone likes Ryan’s proposal, no one had proposed anything better. And meaningful reform inevitably involves sacrifice: America’s elected leaders must address today’s problems while improving our nation’s future.

I specifically asked for a seat on the House Budget Committee because I believe that our nation’s budget situation is unsustainable. There is no easy path forward. Instead, we must make the difficult but necessary decisions today that will give our children and grandchildren a brighter future. We need to be saving for our grandkids’ future, not giving them \$4800 each of new debt every year of their lives.

Editorial by Congressman Todd Akin originally published in the [St. Louis Beacon](#) , February 27, 2011.